SPECIAL EDUCATION RESEARCH TRAINING GRANTS

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REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES
http://ies.ed.gov

APPLICATION DEADLINE DATE: **October 2, 2008**

PART I GENERAL OVERVIEW

1. REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

In this announcement, the Institute of Education Sciences (Institute) describes the postdoctoral research training program that is funded through its National Center for Special Education Research. Separate announcements are available on the Institute's website that pertain to the discretionary grant competitions that are funded through the National Center for Special Education Research (http://ncser.ed.gov) and to the research programs grant programs and research training programs funded through the Institute's National Center for Education Research (http://ncer.ed.gov).

The Institute invites applications for its Postdoctoral Special Education Research Training grant program. For the FY 2009 competition, the Institute will consider only applications that meet the requirements outlined below in this Request for Applications.

The Institute only funds institutions interested in developing a research training program, and does not directly fund individuals seeking postdoctoral support; individuals seeking support are encouraged to contact the directors of current IES training programs (http://ies.ed.gov/ncer/projects/).

2. OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTE'S RESEARCH PROGRAMS

The Institute's over-arching priority is research that contributes to improved academic achievement for all students, and particularly for those whose education prospects are hindered by inadequate education services and conditions associated with poverty, race/ethnicity, limited English proficiency, disability, and family circumstance.

With academic achievement as the major priority, the Institute focuses on outcomes that differ by periods of education. In the infancy and preschool period, the outcomes of interest are those that enhance readiness for schooling (e.g., language skills) and developmental outcomes for infants and toddlers with disabilities. In kindergarten through 12th grade, the core academic outcomes of reading and writing (including reading and writing in the disciplines), mathematics, and science are emphasized, as well as the behaviors and social skills that support learning in school and successful transitions to employment, independent living, and post-secondary education. At the post-secondary level, the focus is on enrollment in and completion of programs that prepare students for successful careers and lives. The same outcomes are emphasized for students with disabilities across each of these periods, and include the functional outcomes that improve educational and transitional results. The acquisition of basic skills by adults with low levels of education is also a priority.

In conducting research on academic outcomes, the Institute concentrates on conditions within the control of the education system, with the aim of identifying, developing, and validating effective education programs, practices, policies, and approaches as well as understanding the factors that influence variation in their effectiveness such as implementation. Conditions that are of highest priority to the Institute are in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment (including the identification of students with disabilities), the quality of the education workforce, and the systems and policies that affect these conditions and their interrelationships (for example, accountability systems, delivery mechanisms including technology, and policies that support the ability of parents to improve educational results for their children through such means as choice of education services and provision of school-related learning opportunities in the home).

In this section, the Institute describes the overall framework for its research grant programs. The Institute addresses the educational needs of typically developing students through its Education Research programs and the needs of students with disabilities through its Special Education Research programs. Both the Education Research and the Special Education Research programs are organized by outcomes (e.g., reading, mathematics), type of education condition (e.g., curriculum and instruction; teacher quality; administration, systems, and policy), grade level, and research goals.

A. Outcomes

The Institute's research programs focus on improvement of the following education outcomes: (a) readiness for schooling (pre-reading, pre-writing, early mathematics and science knowledge and skills, and social development); (b) academic outcomes in reading, writing, mathematics, and science; (c) student behavior and social interactions within schools that affect the learning of academic content; (d) skills that support independent living for students with significant disabilities; and (e) educational attainment (high school graduation, enrollment in and completion of post-secondary education).

B. Conditions

In general, each of the Institute's research programs focuses on a particular type of condition (e.g., curriculum and instruction) that may affect one or more of the outcomes listed previously (e.g., reading). The Institute's research programs are listed below according to the primary condition that is the focus of the program.

a. Curriculum and instruction

Several of the Institute's programs focus on the development and evaluation of curricula and instructional approaches. These programs include: (a) Reading and Writing; (b) Mathematics and Science Education; (c) Cognition and Student Learning; (d) Social and Behavioral Context for Academic Learning; (e) Early Childhood Programs and Policies; (f) Interventions for Struggling Adolescent and Adult Readers and Writers; and (g) Education Technology.

b. Quality of the education workforce

A second condition that affects student learning and achievement is the quality of teachers and education leaders (e.g., principals, superintendents). The Institute funds research on how to improve teacher quality and education leadership through its programs on (a) Teacher Quality – Reading and Writing; (b) Teacher Quality – Mathematics and Science Education, (c) Education Leadership, and (d) Education Technology.

c. Administration, systems, and policy

A third approach to improving student outcomes is to identify systemic differences in the ways in which schools and districts are led, organized, managed, and operated that may be directly or indirectly linked to student outcomes. The Institute takes this approach in its programs on (a) Education Policy, Finance, and Systems; (b) Early Childhood Programs and Policies; (c) Middle and High School Reform; and (d) Postsecondary Education.

Applicants should be aware that some of the Institute's programs cover multiple conditions. For example, the following programs cover multiple conditions: (a) Early Childhood Programs and Policies; and (b) Education Technology.

C. Grade Levels

The Institute's research programs also specify the ages or grade levels covered in the research program. The specific grades vary across research programs and within each research program, and grades may vary across the research goals. In general, the Institute supports research for (a) prekindergarten and kindergarten, (b) elementary school, (c) middle school, (d) high school, (e) post-secondary education, (f) vocational education, and (g) adult education. In addition, the Institute supports research on infants and toddlers with disabilities.

D. Research Goals

The Institute has established five research goals for its research programs. Within each research program one or more of the goals may apply: (a) Goal One – identify existing programs, practices, and policies that may have an impact on student outcomes and the factors that may mediate or moderate the effects of these programs, practices, and policies; (b) Goal Two – develop programs, practices, and policies that are theoretically and empirically based; (c) Goal Three – evaluate the efficacy of fully developed programs, practices, and policies; (d) Goal Four – evaluate the impact of programs, practices, and policies implemented at scale; and (e) Goal Five – develop and/or validate data and measurement systems and tools.

For a list of the Institute's FY 2009 research and training grant topics – including grant competitions through the Institute's National Center for Education Research and National Center for Special Education Research, please see Table 1 below. Funding announcements for these competitions may be downloaded from the Institute's website at http://ies.ed.gov.

Table 1: FY 2009 Research and Training Grant Topics

Table 1: FY 2009 Research and Training Grant Topics:

National Center for Education Research
1. Research Grant Topics
- Reading and Writing
- Mathematics and Science Education
- Cognition and Student Learning
- Teacher Quality – Reading and Writing
- Teacher Quality – Mathematics and Science Education
- Social and Behavioral Context for Academic Learning
- Education Leadership
- Education Policy, Finance, and Systems
- Early Childhood Programs and Policies
- Middle and High School Reform
- Interventions for Struggling Adolescent and Adult Readers and Writers
- Postsecondary Education
- Education Technology

2. Research Training Grant Topics
- Postdoctoral Research Training Program
- Predoctoral Research Training Program

3. National Research and Development Center Topics
- Center on Teacher Effectiveness
- Center on Rural Education
- Center on Turning Around Chronically Low Achieving Schools

4. Statistical and Research Methodology in Education

5. Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies

National Center for Special Education Research
1. Research Grant Topics
- Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education
- Reading, Writing, and Language Development
- Mathematics and Science Education
- Social and Behavioral Outcomes to Support Learning
- Transition Outcomes for Special Education Secondary Students
- Cognition and Student Learning in Special Education
- Teacher Quality
- Related Services
- Systemic Interventions and Policies for Special Education
- Autism Spectrum Disorders

2. Research Training Grant Topics
- Postdoctoral Special Education Research Training

PART II RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAM IN THE EDUCATION SCIENCES

3. PURPOSE

The institute has established its postdoctoral research training program in special education to increase the supply of scientists and researchers in education who are prepared to conduct rigorous evaluation studies, develop and evaluate new products and approaches that are grounded in a science of learning, and design and validate tests and measures for students in special education. The specific intent of this program is to prepare researchers who are able to prepare competitive proposals that address relevant special education topics and meet the methodological requirements specified in the research goals described in the Requests for Applications for the Institute's research grant competitions.

The Institute's research grant competitions are designed to produce research that contributes to the solution of education problems identified by education decision-makers and practitioners. These research grant programs target key student outcomes and the types of research questions posed by education decision-makers and practitioners.[1] In early childhood, the primary outcomes of interest are school readiness and developmental outcomes for infants and toddlers with disabilities. From kindergarten through Grade 12, the core academic outcomes of reading, writing, mathematics, and science are the central outcomes of interest, as well as social and behavioral skills that support academic learning in school and successful transitions to employment, independent living, and post-secondary education. The same outcomes are emphasized for students with disabilities across each of these periods, and include the functional outcomes that improve educational and transitional results. At the postsecondary level, the Institute focuses on improving access to and completion of postsecondary education. Finally, for adults with low levels of education, the Institute supports research to improve the acquisition of basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills.

4. BACKGROUND

Grounding special education policy and practice in the United States on evidence will require transformation of both the research and practice fields. Students with disabilities continue to fare much worse than their peers without disabilities, achieving lower rates of success on both in-school (e.g., achievement) and post-school outcomes (e.g., employment) (e.g., Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, 2005; Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002). To improve outcomes for students with disabilities, practitioners will have to turn routinely to education research when making important decisions, and education researchers will have to produce research that is relevant to those decisions. To achieve this ambitious agenda, there is a need for a cadre of well-trained scientists capable of conducting high quality research in special education that is relevant to practitioners and policymakers.

Many of the questions raised by practitioners and policymakers require answers to questions of what works in special education for whom and under what circumstances. These are causal questions that are best answered by research using cluster randomized controlled designs or well-designed quasi-experimental designs. However, the special education research community has not employed group causal designs regularly or systematically to address causal research questions (Seethaler & Fuchs, 2005). Special education also provides unique challenges to researchers, because employing a randomized group design for certain disabilities (e.g., low-incidence disabilities) can pose enormous challenges for recruiting participants, selecting participants, and implementing such a design. Through its research grant programs, the Institute encourages research that addresses questions of what works, for whom, and under what circumstances by inviting applicants to submit proposals to carry out such projects under the *Efficacy and Replication* goal and the *Scale-Up Evaluations* goal in the Institute's research funding announcements.

Another category of questions raised by the practice community focuses on assessment; the standards and accountability movement has generated a ballooning demand for assessment research in special education. There is a particular need for researchers who can address questions of how assessments for accountability can best be designed and used to capture and represent proficiency and growth for children with disabilities. Across

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[1] Descriptions of the Institute's research programs are available in the Institute's current Education Research Request for Applications available at http://ies.ed.gov/funding/.

its research grant programs, the Institute encourages the development and validation of assessments under the *Measurement and Assessment* goal in the Institute's research funding announcements. Individuals with skills in psychometrics are needed throughout the education sector, from federal statistics agencies to state education agencies, from test developers to local school districts.

Yet another category of problems raised by practitioners and policy makers is the need for a new generation of teaching materials and curricula that take advantage of expanding knowledge of how people learn, and that leverage new delivery mechanisms such as the internet (National Research Council, 2000). The complexity of student characteristics within and across disability categories, and the diversity of placement settings and services requires the development of interventions targeting students across the full spectrum of disability categories (Odom, Brantlinger, Gersten, Horner, Thompson, and Harris, 2005). Across its research grant programs, the Institute supports projects to develop new education interventions (e.g., curricula, instructional approaches, professional development training) under the *Development* goal in the Institute's research grant funding announcements. The conceptualization, development, implementation, and evaluation of new teaching methods will require scientists who are well trained in cognition, learning, motivation, classroom instruction, and teacher training, and who are prepared to conduct research – both development and evaluation studies – in complex, real-world education settings.

The needs of education policy and practice are served not only by research that directly addresses questions of what works but also by research that raises questions and generates hypotheses that can eventually lead to new applications or refinements of existing approaches (National Research Council, 2002). Hypothesis-generating research may rely on complex statistical methods that can tease apart potential causal influences in large datasets or may involve detailed observations of classroom instruction along with sophisticated quantitative analyses to determine the associations between instruction and child outcomes. Across our research grant programs, these types of research efforts are supported under the *Identification* goal in the Institute's research grant funding announcements.

Statistical training is also needed in the design and analysis of experimental and quasi-experimental studies, single case designs, as well as survey and observational data. Although there are many doctoral training programs that focus on statistics, the application of this expertise to problems in special education requires that students be grounded in special education content. That, in turn, requires a concentration of statistically sophisticated students and faculty who are focused on special education topics, including the design and analysis of single-case research methods.

PART III REQUIREMENTS FOR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAM

5. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAM

Program Officer: Dr. Jacquelyn Buckley (202-208-3896; Jacquelyn.Buckley@ed.gov).

The Institute's objectives in creating the Postdoctoral Special Education Research Training Program are to support the training of postdoctoral fellows interested in conducting applied special education research and to produce a cadre of education researchers willing and able to conduct a new generation of methodologically rigorous and educationally relevant scientific research that will provide solutions to our nation's most pressing problems and challenges in special education, early childhood special education, and related services. Grants will be awarded to faculty members from disciplines and fields such as economics, education, special education, human development, political science, psychology, sociology, and statistics within qualified institutions of higher education that will provide intensive training in education research and statistics relevant to special education. Postdoctoral students will typically be supported for two or three years, and will be expected to conduct research on special education topics.

The Postdoctoral Special Education Research Training Program funded by the National Center for Special Education Research, focuses on training for research in special education. Individuals interested in postdoctoral research training fellowships to support research in general education should refer to the postdoctoral research training program supported by the Institute's **National Center for Education Research** (http://ies.ed.gov/ncer/funding/postdoc_training/index.asp).

An institution of higher education may have more than one Postdoctoral Research Training award and may submit more than one Postdoctoral Research Training application as long as different faculty (i.e., Training Director and other key personnel) are responsible for the separate training programs and the training programs have unique areas of research emphasis.

Applicants who intend to revise and resubmit a proposal that was not funded in a previous competition must indicate on the application form that their FY 2009 proposal is a revised proposal. Their prior reviews will be sent to this year's reviewers along with their proposal. Applicants should indicate the revisions that were made to the proposal on the basis of the prior reviews using no more than 3 pages of Appendix A. Please note that the Institute **will not accept applications from current recipients (i.e., Training Directors/Principal Investigators) of Postdoctoral Training grants with start dates before the end of their current award** (e.g., if a Training Director has an FY 2005 Postdoctoral award with an end date of July 30, 2009, a proposal for a new FY 2009 Postdoctoral award must have a start date between August 1, 2009 and September 15, 2009.)

A. Specific Requirements For Applications Submitted to the Postdoctoral Training Program.

a. Significance and purpose of the postdoctoral research training program
Applicants should make a compelling case for the potential contribution of the proposed postdoctoral research training program for training postdoctoral fellows to **gain the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct the types of research the Institute funds.** Applicants should clearly describe how the training relates to the specific research programs of the National Center for Special Education Research, Institute of Education Sciences. Research programs of the Institute are organized by topic area (e.g., reading, writing and language development, mathematics and science education, early intervention and early childhood special education, related services, transition outcomes for special education secondary students, cognition and student learning in special education) and by research goal (e.g., Identification, Development, Efficacy & Replication, Scale-Up Evaluations, or Measurement). Applicants should clearly describe both the topical focus and methodological focus of their proposed training program.

Applicants who currently have or in the past have had a postdoctoral research training grant from the Institute should provide evidence that their current or former postdoctoral fellows have or are developing the knowledge

and skills that will enable them to prepare competitive grant proposals to the Institute and/or conduct research projects that reflect the Institute's content and methodological foci and are productive as education researchers. Such applicants must include a summary table in Appendix A of (a) name of the fellows' primary postdoctoral mentor, (b) the research projects that have been completed or are currently being conducted by their postdoctoral fellows who received support under a prior award, (c) the research topic and methods used for each project, (d) the publications of their postdoctoral fellows, and (e) current positions of former postdoctoral fellows.

b.   Training program plan.
Plans for the proposed postdoctoral research training programs must include the components listed below.

(i)   Training Director.
A Training Director will be the head of the training fellowship and is expected to be the primary mentor for the fellows' research and training activities. The Training Director will have overall responsibility for the administration of the award and interactions with the Institute.

The Training Director must be the Principal or Co-Principal Investigator on one or more education research projects, currently supported by the Institute or other funding sources, that are appropriate for postdoctoral level research training.

(ii)   Plan for recruiting postdoctoral fellows and eligibility requirements of fellows.
Applicants must include a plan for recruiting postdoctoral fellows, including outreach efforts to encourage applications from members of underrepresented minorities. Training Directors are encouraged to consider recruiting fellowship candidates from disciplines other than their own.

Postdoctoral fellowship candidates must be citizens or permanent residents of the United States, and must have received their doctorate prior to beginning the fellowship. Before candidates are offered a fellowship, the Institute must approve postdoctoral fellowship candidates who: (a) have received postdoctoral support through other federal training programs; (b) received support through one of the Institute's predoctoral training grant programs; or (c) have an existing relationship with the Training Director (e.g., dissertation advisor).

(iii)   Plan for training postdoctoral fellows.
The applicant must include a plan for training postdoctoral fellows to conduct rigorous education research. Fellows should: (a) gain the breadth of skills and understanding necessary to conduct rigorous applied research in education, and (b) develop the capacity to independently carry out such research, including applying for grant funding and submitting results for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

The length of the postdoctoral fellowship will typically be two to three years.

Applicants should clearly specify the role that the fellows will play in the Training Director's education research projects, and how these and other training activities will produce independent researchers capable of developing their own education research programs, seeking grant support, and presenting the results of their research in peer-reviewed forums such as professional conferences and journals.

From the Institute's view, a postdoctoral training program would be successful if it produced education researchers who are able to submit competitive applications to the Institute's research competitions. Applicants should demonstrate their capacity to provide such training by describing their current research projects and the relation of these projects to the Institute's research priorities. Applicants must include a summary table in Appendix A of ongoing education research projects that are being conducted by the Training Director and other faculty involved in the proposed training program. For each project listed in this table, the following information should be provided: (a) principal investigator and other core faculty involved in the project; (b) brief description of the research project, including methods used; (c) brief explanation of how the project fits with the Institute's research

programs and goals as listed in the Institute's Special Education Research Request for Applications (http://ies.ed.gov/ncser/funding/); (d) funding source; and (e) duration of project.

Applicants must address how potential fellows would gain experience and training in education research methods and statistical analyses. As appropriate, in addition to direct research experience, fellows may audit courses and engage in other training activities that enhance their knowledge and professional skills (e.g., auditing courses in areas not covered in their doctoral training, receiving training in the administration and scoring of assessment measures).

Fellows' research and training activities must address practical questions in education. It is anticipated that fellows will submit findings from their postdoctoral research activities to peer reviewed forums such as professional conferences and journals. Fellows will attend and present at professional conferences. Fellows are encouraged to work with the Training Director to seek independent grant support for their own research from the Institute or other sources.

(iv) **Stipend support, travel, and additional costs.**
The stipend amount for each fellow is $50,000 per year (12 months) for up to 3 years. Fellows must make satisfactory progress in their research activities in order to remain eligible for fellowship funds. The fellowship must include fringe benefits (e.g., health insurance and normal fees) at the level afforded to other employees of the applicant institution who are at a similar level and class as the postdoctoral fellows, with the Institute's contribution not to exceed $10,500 per year per fellow. There are no funds for tuition costs; fellows are expected to audit any courses that are part of their training. Thus the total stipend plus fringe benefits per fellow per year to be supported through Institute funds is $60,500.

Additional funds of up to $12,000 per year per fellow may be requested to defray the costs of recruiting fellows (e.g., advertisements, travel of applicants necessary for interviews), costs of research by fellows (local travel to research sites, materials, personal computer), and fellow registration and travel expenses to attend professional conferences. These funds may be used to take advantage of training opportunities and resources available through other entities (e.g., methodological or specialized statistical training institutes) that complement the training the postdoctoral fellows receive at the applicant's institution. A portion of these additional funds should be allocated to support both Training Director and fellows' travel for one three-day Institute research meeting each year in Washington, DC.

Applicants should note that there are no funds for faculty research or salaries through this program. Funds for facility renovation and maintenance are not allowed.

c. Personnel
Applicants must describe the qualifications of key personnel, including the Training Director, specifying their proposed role in the training program within the 15 page narrative of the proposal and elaborating how the research expertise of the key personnel reflect the content and methodological foci of the Institute. Training Directors should make their time commitment to the program clear in the training program narrative. Additional information on personnel should be provided in their 4-page biographical sketches (or abbreviated curriculum vitae).

d. Resources
Applicants must provide a description of the resources available to support the training fellowship at the participating institution, including field settings (e.g., schools, software development laboratories) with which the Training Director has a relationship that could support fellow's research projects.

e. Awards
The maximum length of the grant is 4 years. Applicants may request funds for up to 4 fellows. The amount of the award will depend on the number of fellows to be supported on stipends and the length of the fellowships (i.e., 2 or 3 years). The Institute anticipates making awards of approximately $160,000 per year for 4 years. In

no case should a request exceed $200,000 per year. The amounts above assume that four fellows will be supported for 2 years each, but applicants are free to request support for fewer fellows to be supported for 2 or 3 years each.

PART IV GENERAL SUBMISSION AND REVIEW INFORMATION

6. MECHANISM OF SUPPORT
The Institute intends to award grants under the Special Education Research Training programs pursuant to this request for applications. The maximum length of the award period is four years for the postdoctoral awards.

7. FUNDING AVAILABLE
Awards will typically be about $160,000 (total cost = direct + indirect cost) per year for 4 years. In no case should a request exceed $200,000 (total cost) per year.

Although the plans of the Institute include this training program, awards pursuant to this request for applications are contingent upon the availability of funds and the receipt of a sufficient number of meritorious applications. The number of programs funded depends upon the number of high-quality applications submitted.

8. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS
For the Postdoctoral Special Education Research Training Programs, eligible applicants are academic institutions in the United States and its territories that grant doctoral degrees in fields relevant to education. The proposed Directors of these training programs must be the Principal or Co-Principal Investigator on one or more education research grants currently supported by the Institute or other funding source.

9. DESIGNATION OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
The applicant institution is responsible for identifying the Principal Investigator. The Principal Investigator is the individual who has the authority and responsibility for the proper conduct of the training program, including the appropriate use of federal funds and the submission of required progress reports. An applicant institution may elect to designate more than one Principal Investigator. In so doing, the applicant institution identifies them as individuals **who share the authority and responsibility** for leading and directing the training program intellectually and logistically. All Principal Investigators will be listed on any grant award notification. However, institutions applying for funding must designate a single point of contact for the project. The role of this person is primarily for communication purposes on the scientific and related budgetary aspects of the project and should be listed as the Principal Investigator. All other Principal Investigators should be listed as Co-Principal Investigators.

10. SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS
Special Education Research Training grant recipients who have not successfully recruited the number of fellows for whom they requested funding will have their continuation funding adjusted as a result.

Research associated with this training fellowship must be relevant to U.S. special education. Fellowship recipients are expected to publish or otherwise make publicly available the results of the work supported through this training fellowship.

Postdoctoral fellowship recipients and Directors of the Postdoctoral Research Training Programs must attend one three-day meeting each year in Washington, DC, with other grantees and Institute staff.

Postdoctoral fellowship recipients and Directors of the Postdoctoral Research Training Programs must complete the Institute's annual Research Training Survey in order to help the Institute determine if the training programs are achieving the Institute's goal of producing high quality education researchers.

U.S. Department of Education policy (34 CFR 75.562 (c)(2)) limits indirect cost reimbursement on a training grant to the recipient's actual indirect costs, as determined by its negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, or eight percent of a modified total direct cost base, whichever amount is less. For the purposes of this competition, a modified total direct cost base is defined as total direct costs less stipends, tuition and related fees, and capital expenditures of $5,000 or more.

11. LETTER OF INTENT

A letter indicating a potential applicant's intent to submit an application is encouraged, but optional, for each application. Although the letter of intent is optional, is not binding, and does not enter into the review of a subsequent application, the information that it contains allows Institute staff to estimate the potential workload to plan the review. The letter of intent form must be submitted electronically by the date listed in this document, using the instructions provided at: https://ies.constellagroup.com.

A. Content

A letter indicating an applicant's intent to submit an application is optional, but encouraged, for each application. The letter of intent form must be submitted electronically by the date listed in this document, using the instructions provided at: https://ies.constellagroup.com.

The letter of intent should include:
- Descriptive title;
- The name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the Training Director;
- Brief description of the current research projects that the fellows would be part of;
- Duration of the proposed project;
- Estimated budget request by year and a total budget request.

B. Format and Page Limitation

The project description should be single-spaced and should not exceed one page (about 3,500 characters).

12. APPLICATION PACKAGE AVAILABLE ON GRANTS.GOV

A. Date Application Package is Available on Grants.gov

The application form approved for use in the competitions specified in this RFA is the government-wide SF424 Research and Related (R&R) Form (OMB Number 4040-0001).

Application forms and instructions for the electronic submission of applications will be available for the programs of research listed in this RFA from the following website:

      http://www.Grants.gov/ by the following date: August 4, 2008

B. Download Correct Application Package
a. CFDA number

Applicants must first search by the CFDA number for each IES Request for Applications without the alpha suffix to obtain the correct downloadable Application Instructions and Application Package. For the Special Education Research Training Grants Request for Applications, applicants must search on: **CFDA 84.324.**

b. Special Education Research Training Grants Application Instructions and Application Package

The Grants.gov search on CFDA 84.324 will yield more than one application package. For the Special Education Research Training Grants Request for Applications (i.e., the research topic listed in this Request for Applications), applicants will be able to download packages marked:

CFDA 84-324B2009 Special Education Research Training Grants Application Instructions and Application Package

An applicant must download the application package designated for the competition and deadline date to which the applicant wishes to apply or the application will be submitted to the wrong competition.

13. SUBMISSION PROCESS AND DEADLINE

Applications must be submitted **electronically by 4:30 p.m.**, **Washington, DC time** on the application deadline date, using the ED standard forms and the instructions provided on the Grants.gov website.

Potential applicants should check this site for information about the electronic submission procedures that must be followed and the software that will be required.

14. APPLICATION CONTENT AND FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

A. Overview

All of the instructions and requirements regarding (a) submission of the application, (b) application page limits, (c) acceptable format, and (d) necessary attachments (.PDF files) will be provided in the **Application Instructions** document for this competition that can be found under the "For Applicants -- Apply for Grants" link of Grants.gov. Also, all of the required forms will be provided in the **Application Package** that accompanies the Application Instructions.

In this section, the Institute provides instructions regarding the content of the (a) project summary/abstract, (b) training program narrative, (c) bibliography and references cited, (d) biographical sketches of senior/key personnel, (e) narrative budget justification (f) subaward budget, (g) Appendix A, and (j) additional forms. The instructions below will be reiterated in the Application Instructions document for this competition, which will be available, as noted above, under the "For Applicants -- Apply for Grants" link of Grants.gov.

B. General Format Requirements

Margin, format, and font size requirements apply to the project summary, project narrative, bibliography, biographical sketches, narrative budget justification, Appendix A, and Appendix B. To ensure that the text is easy for reviewers to read and that all applicants have the same amount of available space in which to describe their projects, applicants must adhere to the type size and format specifications for the entire narrative including footnotes. **It is very important that applicants review carefully the "Application Format Requirements" outlined in the *Fiscal Year 2009 Application Package Highlights,*** which will be part of the application instructions, to be available on http://www.Grants.gov.

a. Page and Margin Specifications

For the purposes of applications submitted under this RFA, a "page" is 8.5 in. x 11 in., on one side only, with 1 inch margins at the top, bottom, and both sides.

b. Spacing

Text must be single spaced in the narrative.

c. Type Size (Font Size)

Type must conform to the following three requirements:

- The height of the letters must not be smaller than a type size of 12 point.
- Type density, including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per inch (cpi).
  For proportional spacing, the average for any representative section of text must not exceed 15 cpi.
- Type size must yield no more than 6 lines of type within a vertical inch.

Applicants should check the type size using a standard device for measuring type size, rather than relying on the font selected for a particular word processing/printer combination. The type size used must conform to all three requirements. Small type size makes it difficult for reviewers to read the application; consequently, the use of small type will be grounds for the Institute to return the application without peer review.

Adherence to type size and line spacing requirements is necessary so that no applicant will have an unfair advantage, by using small type or by providing more text in their applications. **Note, these requirements apply to the .PDF file as submitted**. As a practical matter, applicants who use a 12-point Times New Roman font without compressing, kerning, condensing or other alterations typically meet these requirements.

Figures, charts, tables, and figure legends may be in a smaller type size but must be readily legible.

d. Graphs, diagrams, tables
Applicants must use only black and white in graphs, diagrams, tables, and charts. The application must contain only material that reproduces well when photocopied in black and white.

C. Project Summary/Abstract
a. Submission
The project summary/abstract will be submitted as a .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements
The project summary/abstract is limited to 1 single-spaced page and must adhere to the margin, format, and font size requirements above.

c. Content
The project summary/abstract should include:
- (1)   Title of the research training fellowship;
- (2)   Name and institutional affiliation of the Training Director;
- (3)   Number of fellows to be recruited and length of fellowship;
- (4)   Brief description of education research currently conducted by the proposed Training Director and opportunities for fellows to be involved in education research; and
- (5)   Brief description of the proposed training fellowship, highlighting its key research and educational features.

D. Research Training Program Narrative

a. Submission
The project narrative will be submitted as a .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements
The project narrative is limited to **15 single-spaced pages** for all applicants. The 15-page limit for the project narrative does not include any of the SF 424 forms, the one-page summary/abstract, the appendices, research on human subjects information, bibliography and references cited, biographical sketches of senior/key personnel, narrative budget justification, subaward budget information, or certifications and assurances.

Reviewers are able to conduct the highest quality review when applications are concise and easy to read, with pages numbered consecutively.

c. Format for citing references in text
To ensure that all applicants have the same amount of available space in which to describe their projects in the project narrative, applicants should use the author-date style of citation (e.g., James, 2004), such as that described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th Ed.* (American Psychological Association, 2001).

d. Content
Incorporating the requirements outlined under the section on Requirements For The Postdoctoral Research Training Program, the *project narrative* provides the majority of the information on which reviewers will evaluate the proposal.

The project narrative must include four sections: (a) Significance, (b) Training Program Plan, (c) Personnel, and (d) Resources. Information to be included in each of these sections is detailed in **Part III: Requirements for the Postdoctoral Research Training Program.**

E. Bibliography and References Cited

a. Submission

The section will be submitted as a .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements

There are no limitations to the number of pages in the bibliography. The bibliography must adhere to the margin, format, and font size requirements described in section 14.B. General Format Requirements.

c. Content

Applicants should include complete citations, including the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), titles (e.g., article and journal, chapter and book, book), page numbers, and year of publication for literature cited in the research narrative.

F. Biographical Sketches of Senior/Key Personnel

a. Submission

The section will be submitted as a .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements

A biographical sketch should be provided for the principal investigator and other key personnel**. Each biographical sketch (e.g., abbreviated curriculum vitae) is limited to 4 pages**. The biographical sketch must adhere to the margin, format, and font size requirements described in section 14.B. General Format Requirements.

c. Content

Each biographical sketch should include information sufficient to demonstrate that personnel possess training and expertise commensurate with their duties (e.g., publications, grants, relevant research experience) and have adequate time devoted to the project to carry out their duties. Applicants are reminded to review information in section 9 Designation of Principal Investigator.

d. List of current and pending grants

Applicants should provide a list of all current and pending grants along with the proportion of the individual's time allocated to each project for the principal investigator and other key personnel for the project. This information is to be provided as a table attached to the biographical sketch (i.e., a fifth page).

G. Narrative Budget Justification

a. Submission

The section will be submitted as a .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements

There are no page limitations for the narrative budget justification. The narrative budget justification must adhere to the margin, format, and font size requirements described in section 14.B. General Format Requirements.

c. Content

The narrative budget justification should provide sufficient detail to allow reviewers to judge whether reasonable costs have been attributed to the project. The budget justification should correspond to the itemized breakdown of project costs that is provided in the Research & Related Budget (SF 424) Sections A & B; C, D, &E; and F-K. It should include the time commitments and brief descriptions of the responsibilities of key personnel. For consultants, the narrative should include the number of days of anticipated consultation, the expected rate of compensation, travel, per diem, and other related costs. A justification for equipment purchase, supplies, travel and other related project costs should also be provided in the budget narrative for each project year outlined in the Research & Related Budget (SF 424).

For those applications that include a subaward(s) for work conducted at collaborating institutions, the narrative should also provide the details about the subaward(s). Include the actual subaward budgets as a separate attachment. (See below "Subaward Budget".)

d. Indirect cost rate
U.S. Department of Education policy (34 CFR 75.562 (c)(2)) limits indirect cost reimbursement on a training grant to the recipient's actual indirect costs, as determined by its negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, or eight percent of a modified total direct cost base, whichever amount is less. For the purposes of this competition, a modified total direct cost base is defined as total direct costs less stipends, tuition and related fees, and capital expenditures of $5,000 or more.

H. Subaward Budget

a. Submission
The section will be submitted as a .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements
To allow applicants to enter subaward budget information in accordance with a prescribed format (R&R Subaward Budget), an Excel spreadsheet will be provided at:

> http://ies.ed.gov/funding/

Applicants will download and complete the spreadsheet in Excel format, convert it to a .PDF file, and then upload it as an attachment. There are no page limitations to the spreadsheet.

c. Content
For applications that include a subaward(s) for work conducted at collaborating institutions, applicants must submit an itemized budget spreadsheet for each subaward for each project year. As noted above, the details of the subaward costs should be included in the Narrative Budget Justification.

I. Appendix A

a. Submission
Appendix A should be included at the end of the Project Narrative and submitted as part of the same .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements
Appendix A is limited to 15 pages. It must adhere to the margin, format, and font size requirements described in section 14.B. General Format Requirements.

c. Content
(i) Purpose.
> The purpose of Appendix A is to allow the applicant to include any figures, charts, or tables that supplement the training fellowship narrative. As described in section 5.A.b.iii, applicants should include a summary table of ongoing education research projects that are being conducted by the training director and other faculty involved in the proposed training program. For example, applicants might provide a table listing the projects that potential fellows could work on. As described in Section 5.A.a., applicants who currently have or in the past have had a postdoctoral research training grant from the Institute must also include information on current and former postdoctoral fellows. In addition, in the case of a resubmission, the applicant may use up to 3 pages of the appendix to describe the ways in which the revised proposal is responsive to prior reviewer feedback. These are the only materials that may be included in Appendix A; all other materials will be removed prior to review of the application. Narrative text related to any aspect of the training program must be included in the postdoctoral training narrative.

(ii) **Letters of support.**
Applicants must provide a support letter from the participating institution. The letter should include enough information to make it clear that the author of the letter understands the nature of the commitment of time, space, and resources to the training fellowship that will be required if the application is funded.

L. Additional Forms

Please note that applicants selected for funding will be required to submit the following certifications and assurances before a grant is issued:

(1) SF 424B-Assurances-Non-Construction Programs
(2) Grants.gov Lobbying Form
(3) SF-LLL (if applicable) - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
(4) Protection of Human Research Subjects assurance and/or Institutional Review Board certification, as appropriate*

*Refer to the Fiscal Year 2009 Application Package for New Grants, available on http://www.Grants.gov, which details the information about the Human Subjects narrative, if applicable, that is required to be submitted with the application.

15. APPLICATION PROCESSING

Applications must be received by **4:30 pm, Washington, D.C. time** on the application deadline date listed in the heading of this request for applications. Upon receipt, each application will be reviewed for completeness and for responsiveness to this request for applications. Applications that do not address specific requirements of this request will be returned to the applicants without further consideration.

16. PEER REVIEW PROCESS

Applications that are compliant and responsive to this request will be evaluated for scientific and technical merit. Reviews will be conducted in accordance with the review criteria stated below by a panel of scientists who have substantive and methodological expertise appropriate to the program of research and request for applications.

Each application will be assigned to one of the Institute's scientific review panels. At least two primary reviewers will complete written evaluations of the application, identifying strengths and weaknesses related to each of the review criteria. Primary reviewers will independently assign a score for each criterion, as well as an overall score, for each application they review. Based on the overall scores assigned by primary reviewers, an average overall score for each application will be calculated and a preliminary rank order of applications will be prepared before the full peer review panel convenes to complete the review of applications.

The full panel will consider and score only those applications deemed to be the most competitive and to have the highest merit, as reflected by the preliminary rank order. A panel member may nominate for consideration by the full panel any proposal that he or she believes merits full panel review but would not have been included in the full panel meeting based on its preliminary rank order.

17. REVIEW CRITERIA FOR SCIENTIFIC MERIT

The purpose of Institute-supported research is to contribute to the solution of education problems and to provide reliable information about the special education practices that support learning and improve academic achievement and access to education for all students. Reviewers for all applications will be expected to assess the following aspects of an application in order to judge the likelihood that the proposed research training program will have a substantial impact on the pursuit of that goal. Information pertinent to each of these criteria is also described above in Part III Requirements for Postdoctoral Research Training Program.

A. Significance
Does the applicant provide a compelling rationale for the significance of the proposed postdoctoral research training program as defined in Section 5.A.a Significance and purpose of the postdoctoral training program?

B. Training program plan
Does the applicant meet the requirement for the training program plan described in Section 5.A.b Training program plan?

C. Personnel
Does the description of the personnel make it apparent that the Training Director and other faculty possess the training and experience and will commit sufficient time to competently implement the proposed training fellowship?

D. Resources
Does the applicant have the facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources required to support the proposed training activities?   Do the commitments of each partner show support for the implementation and success of the project?

18. RECEIPT AND START DATE SCHEDULE

A. Letter of Intent Receipt Dates:
Special Education Research Training Grants Program   July 10, 2008

B. Application Deadline Date:
Special Education Research Training Grants Program   October 2, 2008

C. Earliest Anticipated Start Date:
Special Education Research Training Grants Program   July 1, 2009

19. AWARD DECISIONS
The following will be considered in making award decisions:
- Overall strength of the proposed training program as determined by the peer review process
- Responsiveness to the requirements of this request
- Performance and use of funds under a previous Federal award
- Contribution to the overall goals described in this request
- Availability of funds

20. INQUIRIES MAY BE SENT TO:
Dr. Jacquelyn Buckley
Institute of Education Sciences
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20208

Email: Jacquelyn.Buckley@ed.gov
Telephone: (202) 219-2130

21. PROGRAM AUTHORITY
20 U.S.C. 9501 et seq., the "Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002," Title I of Public Law 107-279, November 5, 2002. This program is not subject to the intergovernmental review requirements of Executive Order 12372.

22. APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 77, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86 (part 86 applies only to institutions of higher education), 97, 98, and 99. In addition 34 CFR part 75 is applicable, except for the provisions in 34 CFR 75.100, 75.101(b), 75.102, 75.103, 75.105, 75.109(a), 75.200, 75.201, 75.209, 75.210, 75.211, 75.217, 75.219, 75.220, 75.221, 75.222, and 75.230.

23. REFERENCES

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